The author is particularly grateful to the Chinese classic *Tao Te Ching* by Lao-Tzu, who is believed to have lived in the 6th century BC. I have read many translations of this ancient text, but Stephen Mitchell's, published by HarperCollins in 1988, is by far the best. I have made a few minor changes in the passages I've quoted with Stephen Mitchell's permission.

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a note to the reader

A Million Little Pieces is about my memories of my time in a drug and alcohol treatment center. As has been accurately revealed by two journalists at an Internet Web site, and subsequently acknowledged by me, during the process of writing the book, I embellished many details about my past experiences, and altered others in order to serve what I felt was the greater purpose of the book. I sincerely apologize to those readers who have been disappointed by my actions.

I first sat down to write the book in the spring of 1997. I wrote what is now the first forty pages of it. I stopped because I didn't feel ready to continue to do it, didn't think I was ready to express some of the trauma I had experienced. I started again in the fall of 2000. I had been working in the film industry and was deeply unsatisfied with what I was doing. I had wanted to write books and was writing films. I saved enough money to give myself eighteen months to write the book.

I didn't initially think of what I was writing as nonfiction or fiction, memoir or autobiography. I wanted to use my experiences to tell my story about addiction and alcoholism, about recovery, about family and friends and faith and love, about redemption and hope. I wanted to write, in the best-case scenario, a book that would change lives, would help people who were struggling, would inspire them in some way. I wanted to write a book that would detail the fight addicts and alcoholics experience in their minds and in their bodies, and detail why that fight is difficult to win. I wanted to write a book that would help the friends and family members of addicts and alcoholics understand that fight.

As I wrote, I worked primarily from memory. I also used supporting documents, such as medical records, therapists' notes, and personal journals,

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when I had them, and when they were relevant. I wanted the stories in the book to ebb and flow, to have dramatic arcs, to have the tension that all great stories require. I altered events and details all the way through the book. Some of those include my role in a train accident that killed a girl from my school. While I was not, in real-life, directly involved in the accident, I was profoundly affected by it. Others involved jail time I served, which in the book is three months, but which in reality was only several hours, and certain criminal events, including an arrest in Ohio, which was embellished. There has been much discussion, and dispute, about a scene in the book involving a root-canal procedure that takes place without anesthesia. I wrote that passage from memory, and have medical records that seem to support it. My account has been questioned by the treatment facility, and they believe my memory may be flawed.

In addition, names and identifying characteristics of all the treatment patients in the book and all of the facility's employees, characteristics including occupations, ages, places of residence, and places and means of death, were changed to protect the anonymity of those involved in this period in my life. This was done in the spirit of respecting every individual's anonymity, which is something we were urged to do while in treatment, and to continue to do after we left.

I made other alterations in my portrayal of myself, most of which portrayed me in ways that made me tougher and more daring and more aggressive than in reality I was, or I am. People cope with adversity in many different ways, ways that are deeply personal. I think one way people cope is by developing a skewed perception of themselves that allows them to overcome and do things they thought they couldn't do before. My mistake, and it is one I deeply regret, is writing about the person I created in my mind to help me cope, and not the person who went through the experience.

There is much debate now about the respective natures of works of memoir, nonfiction, and fiction. That debate will likely continue for some time. I believe, and I understand others strongly disagree, that memoir allows the writer to work from memory instead of from a strict journalistic or historical standard. It is about impression and feeling, about individual recollection. This memoir is a combination of facts about my life and certain embellishments. It is a subjective truth, altered by the mind of a recovering drug addict and alcoholic. Ultimately, it's a story, and one that I could not have written without having lived the life I've lived.

I never expected the book to become as successful as it has, to sell anywhere close to the number of copies it has sold. The experience has been shocking for me, incredibly humbling, and at times terrifying. Throughout this process, I have met thousands of readers, and heard from many thousands more, who were deeply affected by the book, and whose lives were changed by it. I am deeply sorry to any readers who I have disappointed and I hope these revelations will not alter their faith in the book's central message—that drug addiction and alcoholism can be overcome, and there is always a path to redemption if you fight to find one. Thirteen years after I left treatment, I'm still on the path, and I hope, ultimately, I'll get there.

James Frey
New York
January 2006

publisher's note

The controversy over James Frey's *A Million Little Pieces* has caused serious concern at Doubleday and Anchor Books. Recent interpretations of our previous statement notwithstanding, it is not the policy or stance of this company that it doesn't matter whether a book sold as nonfiction is true. A nonfiction book should adhere to the facts as the author knows them.

It is, however, Doubleday and Anchor's policy to stand with our authors when accusations are initially leveled against their work, and we continue to believe this is right and proper. A publisher's relationship with an author is based to an extent on trust. Mr. Frey's repeated representations of the book's accuracy, throughout publication and promotion, assured us that everything in it was true to his recollections. When the Smoking Gun report appeared, our first response, given that we were still learning the facts of the matter, was to support our author. Since then, we have questioned him about the allegations and have sadly come to the realization that a number of facts have been altered and incidents embellished.

We bear a responsibility for what we publish, and apologize to the reading public for any unintentional confusion surrounding the publication of *A Million Little Pieces*.